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Thessaly in the beginning of the 4th century was a rich and populous country. The Thessalians were famous for their luxurious way of life and great passion for horse breeding. Isocrates gives us to understand that their wealth resulted to a great extent from the prosperity of Thessaly itself, which was exceptional in this respect among all the Greek states. He mentions that *"they inherited very great wealth and possess a very rich and abundant territory"*. In his opinion, at the beginning of the 4th century they simply were *"the most prosperous people in Hellas"*.[1] Critias and Theopompus stress the Thessalian tendency to

1. Isocrates *On the Peace* 117; *Antidosis* 155 - G. Norlin translation. For Jason see: F. Stählin, Jason (3), *Real Enzyclopädie* 9, Stuttgart 1914: 771-777; H. T. Wade-Gery, H. T. (1924): Jason of Pherae and Aleuas the Red, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 44: 55-64; J. Hatzfeld, Jason de Pheres a-t-il été l'allié d'Athenes?, *Revue des Études Anciennes* 36, 1934: 441-61; H. D. Westlake, *Thessaly in the Fourth Century*, London 1935: 67-125; A.G. Woodhead, *IG* II^2 43 and Jason of Pherae, *American Journal of Archaeology* 61, 1957: 367-73; M. Sordi, *La lega tessala fino ad Alessandro Magno*, Roma 1958: 156-190; H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen*, München 1967, ; E. D. Frolov, Tyrannis und Monarchie im Balkanischen Griechenland, in E.Ch. Welskopf (ed.), *Hellenische Poleis*, vol. 1. Berlin 1973: 231-400; J. Mandel, Jason: The Tyrant of Pherae, Tagus of Thessaly, as Reflected in Ancient Sources and Modern Literature, The image of the 'New Tyrant', *Rivista Storica dell'Antichita* 10, 1980: 47-77; F. W. Mitchell, The Rasura of IG II^2 43: Jason, the Pheraian demos and the Athenian League, *Ancient World 9*,

extravagant display in the style of life and dress and their love of ostentatious and lavish feasts. [2] The testimony for the grain export and the growth of the cities support this picture of the Thessalian prosperity. The wealth of the Thessalian aristocracy is said to have been accompanied by hospitality shown in their readiness to invite poets and philosophers. They were admirers of Gorgias, who enjoyed great success in Thessaly and earned particular fame and popularity, not to mention a considerable fortune, by arousing the love of philosophy among them. Plato (*Meno* 70 a-b) remarks, perhaps not without irony, that the Thessalians were once famous for wealth and equestrian skills, but now for knowledge. The fashion for surrounding oneself with philosophers inclined Eurylochus of Larissa and Scopas of Crannon to make the effort to bring Socrates to Thessaly.[3]

Notwithstanding, Isocrates put the question why the same Thessalians were incapable of protecting their own borders. He asked why it was that the Thessalians, with cavalry of more than three thousand horse and great number of light-armed troops had their fortresses occupied from time to time by certain other states. It is worth reminding here that around 400 Archelaus, king of Macedonia, intervened in Larissa, about 395 a Spartan garrison was introduced to Pharsalus and in 394 Agesilaos crossed Thessaly and defeated the Thessalian cavalry in the battle of Narthakion. According to Isocrates, arrogance and insolence (*akolasia kai hybris*) were the cause of the Thessalians' misfortunes.[4] We may add to this conclusion the lack of strong central government and the weakness of the federal institutions that hindered the Thessalians from playing principal role on the Greek political stage.

The leading role in the Thessalian *koinon* was always played by a narrow group of powerful aristocracy. They formed *"an extreme oligarchy named dynasteia"*. According to Aristotle, the *dynasteia* arises when a narrow group of families, distinguished for their wealth, bring about a situation in which they themselves decide who will hold office, and

1984: 39-58; B. A. Κύρκος, Σοφιστική και πολιτική πράξις. Ιάσων των Φερών, ένας μαθητής του Γοργία, *Δωδώνη* ΙΓ΄ 1984: 229-247; M. Jehne, Iasons Symmachie mit Athen und das Mitgliederverzeichnis des 2. Athenischen Seebunds, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 89, 1991: 121-134; B. Helly, *L' État Thessalien. Aleuas le Roux les tétrades et les tagoi,* Lyon 1995: 345-353; R. Étienne, Jason de Phères et Philippe II in F. Prost (ed.) Armées et sociétés de la Gréce Classique, Paris 1999: 276-286; and my: *Jason of Pherae* (Electrum 3), Kraków 1999; Ιάσονας των Φερών κατά τις αρχαίες πηγές, *Θεσσαλικό Ημερολόγιο*, 2002: 209-218; Were Lycophron and Jason tyrants of Pherae? Xenophon on a history of Thessaly, in: Ch. Tuplin (ed.), *Xenophon and his World* (Historia-Einzelschriften 172), Stuttgart 2004: 437-452.

2. Athenaeus 418 c-e,527 a, 662 f. Cf. M.A. Flower, *Theopompus of Chios, History and Rethoric in the Fourth Century BC*. Oxford 1994: 67-70 and 196-197.

3. Isocrates, *Antidosis* 155; Aristotle *Politics* 1275 b 26-30; Diogenes Laertius 2.25. B.A. Kurkoj, Sofistikh kai politikh praxij...: 229-247.

4. Isocrates *Peace* 117.

only allow in people from their own circle, making the offices virtually hereditary. Aristotle (*Politics* 1306 a 19-31) describes the political system in Larissa and Pharsalus in this way and most probably it was also the case in other Thessalian cities. The governing elite paid little attention to the will of the majority of the Thessalians, which lead to internal tensions and to inconsistency in the external policy as shown by the example of the intrigues of Aleuads at the time of Xerxes' invasion and the assistance of some aristocrats given to the Spartan general Brasidas in his march through Thessaly at time of the Peloponnesian war.[5] The leaders of the country were called *basileis* until the middle of the 5th century.[6] Some of them were outstanding individuals who tried to dominate the political scene like Lycophron of Pherae or Aristippos and Medeios of Larissa, who managed to assume control of the whole Thessaly for a brief period of time.[7]

The (most probably) highest official of the Thessalian *koinon* was named archos or archon. [8] However, it seems that this office had little significance. It is rather telling that we have no evidence that the persons who actually ruled Thessaly held this office. On the other hand the persons who held the title, e.g. Agelaos or Daochos[9], remain only names to us. For these reasons we may suspect that the official who was the formal leader of the League had limited prerogatives and the real power belonged to the people with who had appropriate power, property and prestige to impose their will. This situation frequently led to destabilisation since it encouraged competition for the actual leadership.

At the end of the 5th century Lycophron of Pherae made an effort to take control of all of Thessaly and defeated in battle those Thessalians who opposed him, killing large numbers of them.[10] Thanks to help from outside, the dynasts from Larissa succeeded in overthrowing the tyranny of Lycophron, though he himself retained Pherae, where he held out for several years. The struggle between Lycophron and the dynasts led to the disintegration of the Thessalian *koinon*. The dynasts of Larissa, Aristippos and Medeios, appealing successively for assistance to Cyrus the Younger and to the anti-Spartan coali-

5. Herodotus 7.6, 130 and 172; Thucydides 4.78.

6. Like in the case of Thorkas, Eurypylos and Thrasydaios (Pinadros, *Pythian* 10.1-5; 62-71; Herodotos, 7.6) and Echecratydas (Thucydides I. 111).

7. Lycophron: Xenophon, Hell. 2.3.4; Aristippos: Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.1.10, Medeios: Diodorus 14.82.6.

8. S. Ferri, I capisaldi della Costituzione Tessalica, *Rivista di Filologia Classica* 8,1930:305; B. Helly, *L' État Thessalien. Aleuas le Roux les tétrades et les tagoi,* Lyon 1995: 63-68. Comapre: M. Sordi, I tagoi tessali come suprema magistratura militare de koinon tessalico, *Topoi* 7, 1997: 177-182; H. Beck, *Polis und Koinon. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Struktur der griechischen Bundesstaaten im 4. Jahrundert v. Chr.*, Stuttgrat 1997: 119-134.

9. Daochos: SIG [3] 274.6; Agelaos: *IG* II[2] 116 = Tod *GHI* 147.

10. Xenophon *Hell.* 2.3.4.

tion, perhaps earlier to the king of Macedon, had set the dangerous precedent of resolving internal disputes with the help of foreign resources. Lycophron lost because he was unable to gain support in Thessaly itself, or to neutralise the foreign influences that were acting in favour of his opponents. It would appear that this experience must have contributed to the growing understanding among many Thessalians of the need to modernize the state. It was necessary both to govern the country more efficiently and improve the organization of the army. Only such changes could lend the Thessalians, confronted with the pressure of foreign powers, a feeling of security. It would appear that this lesson was taken to heart by Lycophron's successor, Jason.

Jason came from the noble Thessalian family originating in Pherae and possibly was an heir of Lycophron. His family does not seem to have differed from the other great aristocratic Thessalian families. We hear that his mother was a wealthy woman and managed her own property. His rich brother Merion had a house in Pagasae and probably profited from the development of the main Thessalian harbour.[11] Jason was able to cover the cost of maintaining 6 thousand mercenaries thanks to the profits from his own estate and the estates of his family. Having this excellently trained army at his disposal, Jason began his struggle to control Thessaly. In the course of the war Jason seized city after city, as he attracted them with appealing terms and avoided humiliating them. No less important than combat was the use of stratagems and diplomacy. Rather than obliterate the enemy, Jason preferred to discourage him from further belligerence and obtain his co-operation. That this was a conscious policy is suggested by his speech to Polydamas as reported by Xenophon. He understood that only voluntary alliance and co-operation of the Thessalians could bring him mutual benefits.[12]

Such behaviour should be identified as the main tenet of Jason's policy toward the Thessalian cities. A man of uncommon stature, he was able to learn from the unsuccessful efforts of Lycophron, and the fate suffered by Medeios of Larissa's mercenaries, murdered in Pharsalus.[13] Jason seemed to understand that the conquest of Thessaly and tyrannical rule over it would not bring him lasting success. Thessalian pride would never allow it, nor would the powerful aristocracy, with its inclination to resort to foreign intervention to solve internal problems. The course to follow was to pressure them into co-operation by a display of irresistible force, combined with a presentation of the benefits to be enjoyed in co-operation. Xenophon recorded how Jason used his power of speech to win the support of Polydamas, a leader of Pharsalus: "... *people who do not know me might reasonably wonder what I am waiting for and why I am not marching against Pharsalus at this moment.*

11. Polyaenus 6.1.2-7

12. Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.7.

13. Aritotle *Hist Anim.* 618 b 15; Pliny *NH* 10.12.33.

The reason, of course, is that I think it is in every way better to have your voluntary, rather then forced, cooperation. If you were under compulsion, you would be planning to do all the harm to me you could, and I on my own side should be wanting to keep you as week as possible. But if I persuade you to join me of your own accord, obviously we shall both do whatever we can to strengthen each other". (Hell. 6.1.7 trans. by R. Warner)

Jason's success in the first half of the 370s was possible due to the political situation that had evolved in and around Thessaly. The Spartans' involvement in the war against Thebes and Athens effectively protected Thessaly from foreign intervention. Jason had done nothing to lose his friendship with Sparta, and later he made an alliance with the Thebans and Athenians. At last, around 373 Jason won control over the whole Thessaly. With the power he possessed he wanted not only to take command of Thessaly but also to legitimise his supreme position. Jason did not run for another term as *archon* since this office apparently did not give him the power he wanted; instead he ran for *tagos*. Although sources mention *tagos* as an official in Thessalian cities, we have no report of anyone else using this title with reference to ruling over the whole state. It seems that Jason created this title and endowed it with rights, which ensured his advantage over any competitor – the right to mobilize and command the Thessalian army and the right to control the *perioikoi* – the Perrhaebians, Dolopians, Phthiotian Achaeans and Magnetes.[14] Although he gained autocratic rule over Thessaly, tyranny obscured by his title of tagos, he made a strong effort to present his position as deeply rooted in the local tradition. Convincing the Thessalians that he was acting according to *nomos* and with their acceptance was an important part of Jason's plans. That is the reason why he was so determined to be elected to the office of *tagos* by common consent. Maintaining the appearances of legality, he emphasized the need to proceed in accordance with the Thessalian *nomos*, and attempted to use persuasion wherever he could, so as not to use force.

We do not know the exact procedure of his election. Xenophon only mentioned that he was appointed *tagos* by general consent and Diodorus wrote that the Thessalians made him their hegemon.[15] We may wonder if Jason established any representative body of the Thessalian cities. However it is probably that he started to revamp the Thessalian *koinon* in an attempt to create an efficient centre of power, a well-organised system of army mobilisation and collecting tribute from the *perioikoi*.

In 371 Jason placed Thessaly among the leading powers of Greece. Having some authority over Alcetas, the ruler of Epirotic kingdom of Molossians, he made an alliance with Amyntas of Macedon to establish his influence in Macedon.[16] After the battle of Leuctra Jason was

14. Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.8-9 and 19.

15. Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.18; Diodorus 15.60.2

16. Alcetas: Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.7. Jason's alliance with Amyntas of Macedon is only supposition based on: Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.11, Isocrates *Philip* 20; Diodorus 15.57.2 and 60.2; Arrian *Anab.* 7.9.4.

called on by the victorious Thebans to help them to strike a final blow to the surviving Spartan troops locked in their camp. He came only to offer himself as a mediator. Unexpectedly both sides agreed to his proposals, which enabled the Spartans to withdraw from Boeotia. Through his diplomatic skills Jason appropriated much of the benefit from Thebans' hard-won victory. On his way back he used the opportunity to gain control over the Thermopylae region. Xenophon, impressed by the power he had assumed that time, wrote: "*So he returned to Thessaly, a great man indeed. He had been legally appointed Lord of Thessaly; he controlled great forces of mercenaries, both infantry and cavalry, and these forces had been trained to the highest pitch of efficiency. He was grater still in the strength of his alliances, many states being allied with him already and others being anxious to do so too. When one considers that there was no power on earth that could afford to disregard him, one may say that he was the greatest man of his times.*" [17]

There could be some exaggeration in the Xenophon's words but is worth noticing that at the height of his power Jason probably could mobilize at least 20.000 hoplites, 8.000 cavalry, a significant number of light infantry and fleet. Undoubtedly, it was enough to place him in the ranks of the most powerful and it should not surprise us that some Greek cities were afraid of Jason *aiming to become tyrant*. [18]

Jason belonged to the generation of the Thessalian aristocracy educated by philosophers and he managed to take advantage of this in building his power, forming his political image. According to Isocrtes he won the highest popularity not for what he did, but for what he said. It is an echo of Jason's breathtaking plans not only to gain leadership in Amphictyony, not even the hegemony over Greece but to make a war against Persia.[19] His program of restoration of the Thessalian influence in the Delphic Amphictyony and in Central Greece appealed to the Thessalians' national pride. Custodianship over Delphi, the chairmanship of the Amphictyonic Council and the organization of the Pythian games had great symbolic significance for them. There was a tradition which associates the reorganization of the Pythian games with the figures of two Thessalian leaders, Eurylochus and Hippias. They were commanders in the war against the city of Crisa, when the Thessalians, along with the other Amphictyons, stood in defence of Delphi, and after hard fighting conquered and destroyed the city, which had deeply offended the god. The triumphant Eurylochus organized games, in which the prize was war booty.[20] The fact that the unity and power of Thessaly

17. Xenophon *Hell.* 6.4.28 R. Warner translation.

18. Xenophon *Hell.* 6.1.19, 4.21 and 32. Compare R. Étienne, *Jason de Phères et Philippe II...*, 277-280.

19. Isocrates *Philip* 119-120. Delphi: Xenophon, *Hell.* 6.4.29-30; Aelian fr. 52 (Hercher); Persia: Valerius Max. 9.10. ext. 2

20. *Scholia ad Pin. Pyth. hyp.* b and c.

were restored may find symbolic confirmation in the formal conduct of the Pythian games. The leadership in the Delphic Amphictyony also played an important role in maintaining political domination over the people of northern Greece, who constituted the majority of the Amphictyonic *ethne*. It was obvious that nothing like this could even be proposed by the dynasts, traditional leaders of the country.

In 370 during his preparation of the expedition to Delphi Jason was murdered. Although Jason did his best to gain support of the Thessalians and to legitimize his power, yet for his enemies he was just a tyrant. And he was killed as tyrant by a group of the young assassinators. Probably it was a personal feud that lead to his death because his brothers Polydorus and Polyphron had no difficulties in succeeding him. They became both *tagoi* and both lost their life very soon. Polyphron who, according to Xenophon, through his behaviour made *tageia* similar to tyranny probably murdered Polydorus. His nephew Alexander in turn killed Polyphron. At the very beginning the new ruler followed the example of Jason and tried to present himself as an official of the *koinon* but when the Thessalians had refused to recognize him as legal *tagos*, he created new political program and new ideology of his power. But it does not mean that Jason's achievements where entirely lost. Alexander did his best, not without success, to preserve until 364 strong personal power over the majority of the country opposing the Thebans, the best army of his times, and their Thessalian supporters.[21] The Thessalian *koinon* revamped by Jason survived his death and the war against his successor. We may wonder how much its shape reflected in the text of the treaty with Athens of 361/0 was formed by Jason's reforms. [22]

Jason made efforts to transform the weak Thessalian *koinon* into a powerful and efficient state and he could be counted among the first in Greece who challenged Sparta and Athens in pursuit of hegemony. At the same time Thebes under the leadership of Epamminondas persuaded his countrymen that they could beat the Spartans. After the battle of Leuctra growing ambitions were noted among the Arcadians, who had been so instilled with high self-esteem by Lycomedes that they demanded for themselves a rank equal to that of Thebes.[23] Finally, less than twenty years later, Philomelus encouraged the Phocians to repudiate the verdicts of the Amphictyons and fight for the control of Delphi.[24] At last, Philip transformed Macedon from the feeble country at the outskirts of the Greek world into a superpower. There are reasons to believe that Jason's experiences and plans could

21. See my «Ο Αλέξανδρος των Φερών· μια νέα προσέγγιση», *Θεσσαλικό Ημερολόγιο*, 48, 2005: 177-194.

22. See: *IG* II^2 116.

23. Xenophon *Hell.* 7.1.23-24.

24. Diodorus 16.23.4-24.5.

have played a significant role in shaping Philip's policy toward the Thessalians and other Greeks states.[25]

It is worth pointing out that in his attempts to build strong personal power beyond the borders of his own *polis* and to develop a new title to describe his position, Jason could be compare with Dionysus I of Sicily. He made an important step toward the Hellenistic monarchy.[26] Thessaly under the leadership of Jason was not a backward region but, on the contrary, a place where the new shape of Greece was being created.

25. See my All the Kings Men Thessalians and Philip II' s Designs on Greece, in D. Musial (ed.), *Society and Religions. Studies in Greek and Roman Histories*, Torun 2005: 31-49.

26. See forthcoming article of S. Lewis, *Agathocles: Tyranny and kingship in Syracuse* in *Electrum* 11.